

I. The Purpose of a Christian's Life

Now, if you have your Bibles, I want you to turn back to Proverbs chapter 11. That's where we have been, and we have been coming through the book of Proverbs verse by verse and looking at it. I think it's probably one of the greatest books in all of the Bible as far as laying out the issues of life that we all face and the things that we have to deal with. This week and next week, we're going to close out Proverbs chapter 11. This chapter has been a very good chapter. There have been a lot of good practical things that we've looked at that really help us in our Christian life and the things that we can learn from.

Today, I want to look at the final aspect of what a Christian's life is really all about. I think many, many times we get sidetracked with what the real goal that God has for us. It's an easy thing to do. If you're not in a Bible-preaching, Bible-teaching church that somewhat holds you accountable through the preaching of the Word of God, it's very easy to kind of lose your focus and lose your perspective. Today, I want you to be able to see more clearly what the purpose is for why God saved all of us—the real reason why God saved us. I think it's probably the single most important function of the child of God to make him complete in Christ.

You've heard me say it many, many times, and it's a true statement: God has a plan for each of us. But that plan will be wrapped around one single concept that needs to be the bottom line in our life as a child of God. Today and next week, we're going to look at that. As far as I'm concerned, whatever we've done in this chapter, what we have studied, what we've looked at, what I preached about, will only bring us to this final phase of our Christian life of what God wants us to be. I also must tell you that tragically, most of God's people never get here. Most of God's people get saved, and they spend all of their life in somewhat of a relationship with Christ, but they never find out, never figure out, and never accomplish in their life the single thing that God saved them for. I think it's a real tragedy, but that is another message, and it's the way it is today.

You'll remember that we started this whole last section in verse 23. I told you that in chapter 11, verses 23 through 31, was a phenomenal passage. I don't know of another passage anywhere in the Bible that puts so many concepts of what your life and my life should be—all the ingredients. But yet, I want to tell you, all these ingredients are only a means to an end. I want to talk about that end today, but let me refresh your memory of some of the things that we looked at.

First of all, in verse 23, we talked about the desire of the righteous is only good. We talked about that your Christianity is going to be one of two types of Christianity. You're either going to have a convenient Christianity—that's a Christianity that fits what you want to do, a Christianity that fits into your schedule, a Christianity that fits into everything that you want to do, and whatever time you got left over, you give to God. Your Christianity is either going to be a convenient one, or your Christianity is going to be a sacrificial one. That's one who understands, a person who realizes that God died for them, the price that was paid, and they come at some point in their life at different ages, at different times. Some people find it out early. Some people find it out when

they're 40. Some people find it out when they're 30. Some people don't figure it out till they're 50. It's not about when you figure it out; it's about do you ever figure it out? And most of God's people never do. So we talked about the desire of the righteous is only good. I told you that whatever we do in life, whatever we accomplish for God in life, or we don't accomplish for God in life, will come back to that one single concept: our desire, our desire for good, Jesus Christ, the things of God.

Then we looked at verse 24, and it talks about the scattering of the Word of God yet bringeth an increase. We talked about how the great concept in Ecclesiastes chapter 11, cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find that after many days. The concept that if you want to keep what God has given you, you have to give it away. You have to take the Word of God that God has put inside you and give it out to others. You sow in the morning, you sow in the eventide, you put out the Word of God, and it comes back to you in an increase because the Bible says that God's Word never returns void.

We looked at verse 25, the liberal soul being made fat. And there we defined the word liberal in a good sense, not in the sense that we think of today in our world and our politics or our country of the liberal mindset, but liberal as far as putting out the Word of God, not holding anything back, giving all you have to whatever somebody's needs are, and then the fatness, the fatness of the richness of the Word of God and God giving us the bounty of all that he has in his Word for us.

We looked at verse 27, where it says that he that diligently seeketh good, procureth favor, and that favor is with God, a great principle. You will be exactly in life—and I remember preaching on this—you will be exactly in life what you pursue in life, what you diligently seek in life. If you diligently seek the things of God, then you're going to be like God. If you diligently seek the things of the world, then that's exactly how you're going to be.

We looked at verse 28, what a great section that was. What a great piece of the puzzle of the Bible that was. How that the Christian flourishing as a righteous branch, and I showed you how that Christ was the olive tree, and how that Israel was the natural branches, but they got broken off because of unbelief, and how God took the Gentiles and grafted us in—a picture of the church. What a great lesson that was, and how that filled so many blanks of how God is working through the Bible.

And then we looked at verse 29, the wise in heart versus the foolish heart that becomes servant to this world. I showed you how that as a child of God, you can't ever get away from God, out of fellowship with God. You can't ever stray from God in the Word of God and still prosper in your life as a child of God. You'll always be behind the eight ball. I showed you how that when the nation of Israel went into captivity, they went into the captivity of the world. For the next 2,600 years, including the time that we're living today, there's been no good come to the nation of Israel. For a child of God, when you go into captivity and you leave God, you go into captivity of the world, and nothing good will come of that in your life.

II. Israel's Historical Failure to Bear Fruit

Now, all these things, and I have laid it out historically, how that it's a picture of the nation of Israel and these qualities that the nation of Israel needed to have to be what God wanted them to be. Yet, I've also made the practical application how that these same qualities are the qualities that a Christian needs in our life to be all that God wants us to be—one in the Old Testament, one in the New Testament. Today, we see the end result, the reason that God called out the nation of Israel to the world in the Old Testament. Now, after what we've studied, we also see the reason God called out the church, you and I, the body of believers, called us out to be witnesses to the world.

I want to say today as we approach our verse, Proverbs chapter 11, verse 30 and 31, I want to say to you on the authority of the Word of God, there's only one reason that you and I exist after we get saved. I'm going to show you today by comparing the nation of Israel first and then bringing it back to your life and my life. But after you're saved, God may have a plan for your life, and that plan may be different for everybody here. Some of you may go stay in Kansas City, some of you go around the world or go around the state. But wherever you go, whatever God's plan is, the final analysis of that plan and the reason that God saved you is simply this reason: that you might bear fruit for Him. That's the only reason God saved you.

Our text today is Proverbs chapter 11, verse 30 and 31, which crowns out this great passage. And he says this:

Proverbs 11:30-31

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

Now, Father, we come to You today, and we thank You for these dear folks that have come out today, and they've come to hear something from the Word of God. And Lord, anything that I would have to say would be no value. So I need, Father, the Holy Spirit of God to reach down and to meet with us today, to take this unworthy preacher and take this worthy book and then give it to these people today that have come out to get something from You. Help us, Father, to be diligent, to know that, Father, You are the orchestrator, the great Master Musician who puts all the compositions of the world together for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for one purpose, and that is that the fruit of the righteous is as a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise. And we'll thank You and praise in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it, Amen.

Now, we have made the historical application of Proverbs chapter 11 over the last couple of months as we've been in this chapter. We saw that the nation of Israel—last week we learned that it was the house of Israel, we saw how that works—was in the Old Testament God's plan for the world to find God. When God wanted to reach the world in the Old Testament, He chose a nation, and that nation was a nation unto Him.

When you want to study your Bible, or if you want to take and put your Bible into some kind of easy, understandable format, here's what you do: you realize that God's plan in the Old Testament was about one nation. That nation was the nation of Israel. Then you can take the whole Old Testament and wrap that Old Testament around five things about that nation.

1. You start in Genesis and you see where God formulated the nation of Israel.
2. Then you move into Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and you see God calling out the nation of Israel.
3. Then you go to Judges and 1 and 2 Samuel. Then you see God establishing the nation of Israel.
4. Then you begin to see the nation of Israel turn from God, go away from the things of God, forsake God's Word. Then you find in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, you find the demise of the nation of Israel.
5. Then you take the prophets, the major prophets—Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah—and the minor prophets, and you put those together, and they will form for you the last stage, and that is the captivity of the nation of Israel.

It's an incredible concept. Along with that, you'll find that when you see all of this and you put it all together, you realize that God has a plan. I stated last week in Matthew chapter 21, when I showed you that passage, that the overview of the nation of Israel that God established them to be the salvation of the planet Earth in the Old Testament, and how God required them as a nation to bring forth fruit. You remember Matthew chapter 21, that great overview of God calling them out, and in verse 34, He talks about the nation of Israel when He says, "and the time of the fruit drew near." There was a time after Israel was formed and called out and when they were established that God now demanded of them the reason why He called them out of the world to be His nation, and that was to bear fruit. We know now from all of our past studies that Israel failed in that mission, did they not? They never did produce fruit to God as they were told to do. Last week, I showed you why.

So in the Bible, Israel is likened to many things, and when you want to come through the Old Testament, you'll see these things. You want to jot these things down to remember, but in relationship to their fruit-bearing, or I should say their lack of fruit-bearing, you come through the Bible, you'll find Israel laid out as a vine tree. You'll find out in John 15, Isaiah 27, Matthew 21, Hosea 10, all through the Old Testament. She's likened to a vine tree that has never bore fruit.

You'll find that Israel is likened to a fig tree that has been barren and never bore any fruit, or the fruit that she did bear was bad fruit. You'll find out in Joel chapter 1 and 2, Matthew 21, the New Testament where Jesus walks out and He sees the fig tree and it's barren. He curses that fig tree—a picture of the nation of Israel.

You also will find that, as I said last week in Romans chapter 11, that Israel is a picture of an olive tree. The natural leaves that were on that tree that were to bear fruit, the tree of life, but because she did not, the Bible says that God broke off those leaves.

Along with that, when you come through the Bible—and I'll just throw this in—you'll find seven women in the Old Testament, and if you ever want to do a woman study, they're great women to study. There's all kinds of great things you can learn about them, but their primary example of being in the Bible is these seven women are barren. They have no children. They cannot bear fruit, and each one of them will represent the barren, fruitless nation of the nation of Israel.

- You have Sarah, Genesis chapter 11.

- Rebecca, Genesis chapter 25.
- You have Rachel in Genesis 29.
- You have Hannah in 1 Samuel 1.
- You have Manoah in the book of Judges chapter 13.
- You have the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings chapter 4.
- In Luke chapter 1, verse 7, you have Elizabeth.

These women in their barren state are a picture of the nation of Israel's lack of being able to bear fruit, and each one of these women in time have a child, and in each case when they have a child, that child is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that woman is a picture of the nation of Israel that goes barren down through history, but the day comes when she bears the greatest fruit she ever bore, the Lord Jesus Christ. Incredible study, incredible study.

Now the time of Israel's fruit bearing, we saw this last week in Matthew 21, was under the kings of Israel. That would make it 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. God, the Bible says in Matthew 21:33, it says that He went into a far country and turned His vineyard, Israel, over to a husbandman. Now a husbandman in the Bible is somebody who takes care of trees or crops or a garden, and a husbandman's job is to make sure that he does his work, that that garden or that tree will bring about fruit. The first time you find a husbandman in the Bible is all the way back in Genesis 9 with Noah in verse 20, and it says that Noah began to be a husbandman and planted a vineyard, just after the flood.

But we found out that when God looks at Israel as a vine tree, a fig tree, or a garden, that these husbandmen were the leaders of Israel. Now we saw last week that the leadership failed with the nation of Israel, and that because they failed, Israel failed. They took all that God gave them, all the blessings, all the things that God provided for them. They took every stitch and everything that God gave them, and they turned it around, and they used it to worship Baal, go after all the other false gods, and link themselves up with all the other godless nations, and forsook God and His Word.

We saw also last week because of this, Israel then finally, around 606 BC with the southern tribe, 587 with the northern tribes, they go into captivity, and they cease to exist as a nation for God, and the times of the Gentiles, Luke chapter 21:24, come in. The Bible says in Romans chapter 11 that right now, until the Lord comes back and begins to dynamically deal with the nation of Israel, the blindness in part has happened to the nation of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. And then all Israel shall be saved, but right now she's barren. Now she must go through the next 2,600 years from 606 BC of being barren and fruitless. The scourge of all the Gentile nations, Matthew 24-25. And then the terrible time with the Tribulation period that she has to go through to get to the second coming of Christ, and then she is restored in the Millennium, and finally, after all of her disobedience, after all the things that she had to go through, finally when Christ comes back and she accepts the One that came down, the Lord Jesus Christ as her Messiah, finally she bears fruit.

III. The Church's Mandate to Bear Fruit

Now, Proverbs chapter 11, verse 30, I want to talk to you about it now in a New Testament scenario. I just gave you the Old Testament historical perspective so you'd have some kind of context here. But now I want to talk to you from a practical application. I want to talk to you about how it fits into me or you.

Now, Proverbs chapter 11, verse 30, in a New Testament scenario, God is not going to bring about His salvation through a nation anymore. But now He's going to bring His salvation through spiritual bodies of believers, individuals who have been born again spiritually and make up the spiritual body of Christ for one purpose. I'm going to say it again: God saved you and me for one purpose. That is for you and me to bear fruit, just like the nation of Israel.

The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 11, verse 30:

Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

Where in the Old Testament, Israel as a nation, won nations and men into the kingdom of heaven by a national presence of a nation that glorified and declared God's glory. You'll see examples of that in 1 Kings chapter 10 with the Queen of Sheba as they're coming in to see the greatness of Solomon. Now in the New Testament, our time, the church of Jesus Christ, which is made up of individual believers spiritually born again into the image of God. Now the church will now win men into the kingdom of God by an individual presence that gives and brings glory to Jesus Christ and lost people across this planet. You'll see where in the Old Testament, they saw the temple of God in Jerusalem, which was beautiful. Now in the New Testament, you take that beautiful temple of your body made without hands to the whole lost world. That's how it works.

Notice if you want to make the parallels, the church, you want to break down the New Testament like I gave you the Old Testament, the church goes through five concepts of growth.

6. The church goes through a formulation.
7. The church goes through a calling out.
8. The church goes through an establishment.
9. The church then goes through a demise.
10. The church today of Jesus Christ for the most part, other than a remnant, is in the captivity of this world.

If you don't know that, you don't know very much about churches or what's going on in the world today. The church, just like Israel, has taken all the things, God's people, we have taken all the things that God has given us, all the blessings, all the hand of God's protection, all the things that He's provided for us. We, just like Israel, have taken those things and given them back to the world. Yes, we have. Yes, we have. And in both cases, Israel back then and the church today is nothing more than an empty shell.

IV. The Ministry is People: Building a Soul-Winning Church

Now you have heard me say this many, many times. It's one of my favorite injections to put into whatever I'm preaching, that the ministry is people. I've said this many, many times, and I make no bones about it. My plan for this church has always been very simple: to teach you as individual Christians how to reproduce yourself in others. You start by doing it in your own family first. As I told you Thursday night in Bible study with Cleon's good question at the end there, the whole structure of everything in our society, whether it be the government or whether it be the church, comes back to the family unit. Lose the family, lose the country. Lose the family, lose the church.

Then do it in the church that God has placed you in. Do it where God has put you to learn and grow and to be everything that God wants you to be as you can take everything that you get and bring about that finalization of the personification of God's plan in your life to bear fruit. Don't become fruitless like the nation of Israel.

Now, along with many other things, my job is to teach you what real Bible-based New Testament soul winning is really all about. Next week, as I close this out, I'm going to take you inside the Bible. I'm going to show you from a Bible standpoint exactly that there'll be no question in your mind what it means to be a New Testament soul winner. To teach that Bible-based soul winning has nothing to do with Romans chapter 3. Absolutely nothing to do with Romans 6 or Romans 10 or preaching or passing out of tracts. Those are not soul winning. They are the methods of soul winning but not soul winning found in the Bible.

I can get a trained monkey to pass out tracts. One of my dogs would put a Bible in his mouth and take it across the street and drop it in the yard. I can get a trained parrot to quote the Bible. One time there was a guy, middle of the night, broke into a house, and he's ravaging through the house in the dark, and he hears this voice saying, "Jesus is watching you." He turns around with a flashlight and doesn't see anything, kind of nervous, and he starts to hurry up, and he hears it again, "Jesus is watching you." He shines a light in the corner, and it's a parrot sitting on his perch. He walks over to that parrot. He says, "Did you say that?" And the parrot said, "I sure did. Jesus is watching you." He says, "What kind of stupid people would have a parrot that can say, 'Jesus is watching you?'" The parrot says, "The same kind of stupid people that have a 200-pound Rottweiler named Jesus." "Jesus is watching you."

My job, the job of this church, is to build you up. To build you up with the right things, the right definitions of things in life and in the Bible, the right doctrines and the right principles. My job is to build into each of you, to the best of my ability and the best of your availability, a personal responsibility in ministry, a personal accountability in ministry, a biblical structure of being a tree of life to others, a vision of who you are in Christ and what He saved you for was to bear fruit.

There's a lot of good things in the ministry. I'm sure there are a lot of guys who would say there's a lot of bad things in the ministries too. I never looked at it that way. I've always thought that all things work together for good to them that love God. I always thought the good bad things that some guys think are bad in ministry always have a good outcome one way or the other. But there's many things that have been a joy for me in the ministry over 40 some years. One of my joys as a pastor has been watching this church rise to the level that it has in the last 12 years.

Many of you, most of you, probably very close to all of you, have developed yourself into a righteous branch that has a desire to bear fruit.

I watched it very early on. We're starting our softball season here next week, and to most people it's just a softball league, and it is, much like volleyball we do in the fall. But to me, it's much more than that. To me, it's the ability to watch young men and young ladies take the very first steps of leadership and responsibility. To watch them be responsible for a group of people, their team. To be responsible for their devotions every week that they have to have. I watch that very small step as it begins to develop a leadership.

I watch that some of you move in and you have a desire to teach other people the Bible. How you move one-on-one through Discipleship One or Discipleship Two. Many of you have come up to the level that you actually work with me in the counseling ministry on the same level that I work with the same problems, and it's been a joy for me to see that. I think the prayer groups are another great example of that, where you have to take responsibility. You're again accountable to people, and the people in the group are accountable to each other. It's all a means to an end because I've told you many, many times, and it's the truest statement I ever told you, is that everything in life, certainly in the church of Jesus Christ, everything rises and falls on leadership.

I think camp is another great example. This will be our third year of camp. I watched the first year how it not only changed the kids that went, but it changed the counselors that went. It brought a whole other dimension to our church that we didn't have. We were not ready to have it till that point in time when God put it in Joe and Zack's heart, but when we finally were ready, you rose to the occasion. You rose to the occasion in the second year. How it could be, I don't know, but it was better than the first. It was incredible. I watched God take a week where you took out of your busy schedule and gave consistently to somebody else's life. It changed your life. You didn't want to come home. In some cases, your wife wanted you to stay.

We just finished last weekend what has come to be called Operation Victoria. Victoria is a little missionary girl that lives up in Lincoln, Nebraska, that faithfully for a number of years—and she doesn't probably know this—she's a hero to me. She's someone who year after year went to Haiti, gave up her time in her life to work with kids in an orphanage, and got a terrible disease that nobody here could figure out what it was, and for three and a half years that little girl struggled every day being sick. I look at it as a classic example of what you folks did last week. Her only love of her life is her dogs. Her backyard is huge, and she had a fence that was broken down, and she couldn't mow it. We put together a team of 40-plus people that went up there, rebuilt that fence, put in a rock garden that is world-class, did everything that needed to be done. That is an example of what you are talking about.

Now let me explain something to you. Maybe you don't get this. I love you for doing it. I think you're the greatest people in the world, but let's look a little deeper here. That seamless event of 40-plus people dropping out of the sky and getting the job done with absolutely no issues, it just didn't happen by accident. It didn't happen because we have a lot of good people with a lot of rakes and drill guns, yet we do. It took a plan. It took a philosophy of ministry. It took building you one person at a time. It took the emphasis on the little things, the detail, pounding into you

every week discipline and responsibility and Bible doctrine. It took the investment of time. It took a process of growth to get to the point that you're at right now. Let's be honest, some did and some didn't, but that'll always be the case. Not everybody is ever going to say, "Wow, I really want to give back to God. I want to be on that level where I'm above the rest, that I'm an elite Christian who wants to do great things."

It took extra time, extra classes. It took like Discipleship One and Two, the people ministry, church history, the special Thursday night classes, holding you accountable, getting you the vision, making it plain, writing it on the tables as the Bible says, that you could run with it. It took broadening the base on all levels that you responded and you grew. Where others look at situations like that would say to themselves, "It's impossible. How do we do that?" You look at it and you know, because you're a child of God, we live in a world that we do the impossible.

I'll never forget the greatest line, old Dick Winters—he's dead now, I hope he's in heaven—he was the commander of Easy Company in Band of Brothers when they were surrounded at the Battle of the Bulge and cut off for like two weeks, no food, and the bitterest winter you ever saw in your life in Belgium in a hundred years. The news reporter said to him one time, he said, "Don't you know that you're surrounded?" He looked back and says, "We're paratroopers, we're supposed to be surrounded." You're a Christian, you're a child of God, you're supposed to be victorious in impossible situations because you have an impossible God that can do everything for you. He doesn't know the word impossible. Some of you are learning that, but you grew to that.

It took building into each of you an elitism that you serve the God of the universe, a mentality of toughness, a soldier in the grandest army the world has ever seen that has never tasted defeat, and you've learned to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, taking the cream of the crop. I want to tell you something, that's what God brings here. God has, for whatever purpose, whatever reason, God has deposited in this little podunk part of the universe, on this little peanut planet, in this little town, He has gathered together some of the greatest men and women, young men, young ladies, teenagers that the world has ever seen to have forged themselves in these last days to take their stand.

Our church will go through those same five phases. There was a time when we were formulated, and there's a time where we got called out, and then there's a time when God established us. That's as far as it's going. There'll be no demise and there'll be no captivity because we'll keep the Book. We'll stay with what they gave away. We won't depart from those principles. We'll hold the line with that perfect Book that God gave us, and we'll build young men, young ladies, moms and dads until Jesus comes back. I tried all week to flower that up.

It took a concept of who you are and what you can do with Christ in you and that perfect Book behind you guiding you. It took all of that and a lot more to bring you to the place that you're willing to invest your life into the two things that will last for all of eternity. My dear friend, here is the basics of soul winning because the only two things that will last for all of eternity is the Word of God and the souls of men, and it takes a sacrificial Christianity to do it.

It took that little example I gave you five or six weeks ago of the 39th Infantry Combat Regiment in World War II under the Colonel of Flint, Patty Flint, how he took a rag-tag regiment and turned him into a football fighting force. The one day when he showed up out there for his inspections, he had painting on the side of his helmet, "AAAO." His men looked at him, and NCOs looked at him, and he got up there and he said, "Men, this is from this day forward our motto because we're going to be a regiment that's going to go anywhere, anytime, anyplace, burn nothing, and get the job done." He did it for the government, probably lost it in hell today, but I want to tell you something, that's our motto. That's the motto of this church, that God can take us because you have decided to be what God wants you to be, that you have allowed God to take you and change you and to mold you and to motivate you to be the very best you can be, that God should take you and me and this church anytime, anywhere, anyplace, get the job done. Wear that shirt proudly. You earned it. Nobody gave it to you. You didn't kiss your way up the ladder. You didn't do anything but work hard, get your nose in that Book, and you earned it.

Building an elitism that men and women want to be part of, that they're tired of the drudgery of normal Christianity, the cookie cutters, the play games, the little froth that goes nowhere, but they want to make their life count for something for God, to go anywhere, do anything, be God's rapid deployment unit that will go anywhere that God wants you to go, that God can drop you and me in any part of this world. God has assembled the greatest team of people who love His Book and will give God their all. My joy of it all, my dream in all of it, is simply this: to watch you men and you women, you singles, you high school kids, you moms or dads, do it on your own without me. That's how leadership rises to the top. You'll never become a leader if you're always—I'm always there and you're always looking over your shoulder to see if you made the right choice or what would I do. When you're in command, you command. You do what needs to be done. You rely on the resources of what you've been trained. You follow what you know to be the principles, and you get it done. If I was there, you'd be always looking to me to cross those hard spots in ministry, what to do next, how to handle this, how to make this decision. Sometimes there's really tough decisions, there's really hard calls. But I want to tell you something, you're not a leader because you make good decisions. You're a leader because you can make hard decisions. You're a leader because you can make decisions when they're not popular, but they're right. You're a leader because of the fact that you know what the bottom line is, and you make the call based on what's right, not what's popular. You'd always be looking to me to see if you made the right call. That's not leadership. No, no. You will learn to cross the rivers of ministry under fire, just like I had to. Where most leaders and pastors would be there getting all the glory, getting all the thanks and all the praise for the great accomplishments that you did like Saul. I'll be honest, most pastors think that you can't do it better than them, and then the other half of the pastors are so insecure, they'll never let you do it better than them. My joy, listen, my joy and contentment is watching you, my people, do without me. That's building leadership. To God be the glory, great things He hath done.

I know this, I could split this church from here, from here, and from here, and I could take each four groups and send you in another place to do the exact same thing or something different, and you would get the job done. This church is filled with them. It's filled with them. You'd be doing it because of not what that—of what that Book and what God has done for you. You'll do it

because you understand the price that was paid. You'll do it because you realize what it costs God for your salvation, and you realize that He paid the great price for your salvation. Now it's up to us to pay the price and to do what God died for us to do: produce ourselves in fruit. You will not stand by. You will not give God an easy Christianity. You will not go the way of the world. You will not be part of that. You will stand and be what God wants you to be. Boy, when we get into it next week, I'm going to take you inside the Bible in the New Testament soul winning, and I'm going to show you eight things that define what you are when you are a biblical New Testament soul winner out of Proverbs chapter 11, verse 30.

V. Defining Biblical Soul Winning

Allow me to say this in preparation for next week for just a second. Let me define some things about soul winning for you.

First of all, soul winning is not a church program. I want you to understand that. Soul winning is not some spiritual gift. I've had people actually say, "Well, I don't win people to Christ. That's not my spiritual gift." Soul winning is not a spiritual gift. Sorry.

Soul winning is not about John 3:16 or the Romans Road or the Matthew Turnpike or Acts Avenue. The key of soul winning isn't about your approach, your style, how you present the Gospel, the tracts you use. Soul winning has nothing to do with your circumstances or your situations. Soul winning is not about going to some guy's seminar on winning people to Christ. I've heard him get up there and say, "Well, you know what, for every five people I meet, I win them for—I win them to Christ. Want to be like me?" That's right, you won them to Christ, God didn't. Or buying a book on soul winning, or getting a set of tapes, or taking a class.

Listen to me, listen to me. Soul winning takes place in your life and my life when you and I become a tree of life to others. Today, sitting here, your Christianity is either contagious or it's contaminated. When you become the tree that is planted by the river of waters that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, and your leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever you do, you shall prosper, you will bear fruit.

How many times I've told you, you are who you associate with. I've always thought it was interesting in Ezekiel, I think this is Ezekiel chapter 47, probably in the first 12 verses there, it's showing you the millennial layout of the millennial structure. You have the temple and where Christ is on the throne, and then you have water running out of that, the river of life coming down and then going to the west and then getting into the Mediterranean. The Bible says wherever that water goes, the Dead Sea and all the things that are in it get life. That water is a picture of the Word of God. It also says in those first 12 verses that along the sides, on both sides of that river, trees are planted, and those trees bear fruit. I've always thought to myself, I know what it is doctrinally, and I know what it is historically, but I want to tell you that's a great practical lesson. You want to bear fruit, you plant yourself along the other trees that are along that water of life, brother, and get your roots down in the water coming out of the throne of heaven, and you'll bear some fruit. You start associating with other trees of life, not some of the

dead fig trees you're hanging out with, the bramble bushes. When you become one with this tree, the tree of life, you too will be a tree of life.

Soul winning comes by an intimate relationship you have with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Let me say this, you can't have one without the other. A child of God bearing fruit as he flourishes as a righteous branch as part of the olive tree, the tree of life. Soul winning, bearing fruit, listen to me, it's the natural process of a believer when he is intimate with the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God, and he's tied into the tree of life. The example is marriage. Ephesians 5:22-33. Would a husband or wife get married? Through intimacy, they're going to have children if they don't do something to stop it. Maybe not the first time, second time, but some place in that relationship, through their intimacy, they're going to bear fruit. It's the same thing with a child of God. You have become one with Jesus Christ. You're to be intimate with Him and only Him, and through that intimacy, you in time will bear fruit. It's just as simple as that. Our Christian life is the same way, unless we take spiritual birth control, the world. Now that is the basis for our being a tree of life of winning souls: intimacy, not technique, not what tracts you use, your intimate relationship with Him as a tree of life, you becoming a tree of life, and through the natural process, you will bear fruit.

VI. The Team Concept of Soul Winning

Now I'm closing. I want to give you two things. When I say closing, an hour from now, and we'll get into this whole process next week. Now, soul winning is based on your intimacy with the Holy Spirit of God and your relationship with Christ. But I want to say two things here.

First of all, that doesn't mean that you'll win everybody to Christ that you meet. Next week, I'm going to show you that there's three parts to soul winning. I'm going to explain the process to you next week because it's a process that you certainly need to understand to have a good evaluation of it.

The second thing, it doesn't always mean that your soul winning has to be one-on-one with somebody that you sit down and open your Bible to win them to Christ. That's another myth. I have young Christians, and I love them to death, and I love their zeal and their burden. I don't know how many times they've come over and sat down, and they're burdened because they'll say, "Bob, I've been saved now four years. I've not won anybody to Christ." Well, in your definitions, you haven't, but I'm not too sure that in God's definition yet you have. It's different.

You see, when you're part of this ministry—I'll just use ours as an example, that'll fit for about 98% of you here today—when you're part of this ministry, or really any ministry, and actually you're part of what goes on and you're part of what makes this ministry work, when somebody gets saved on Thursday night or somebody gets saved on Sunday morning, and you've been friendly to them, you loved on them, you shook their hand, and you maybe prayed for them or your prayer group prayed for them, it doesn't matter if you sat down and won them to Christ one-on-one. As far as God's concerned, you won them.

Let me give you a great verse in 1 Samuel 30:24. Boy, if you don't remember any verse, you want to remember this one, one of the best:

1 Samuel 30:24

For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

What a great verse. You see, we're a team. Christianity is a team. It's not about the 40-plus people that went last week. It's about the team because I could take another 40 or another 40 and send them someplace else. It's not one group of people who get it done. The concept of a church is we're a team. We cover each other. We work with each other. We're a team. Not everybody will always be on the firing line all the time, but as a team, we all part alike at the end. Not everybody is going to be the leader at some particular point, but everybody will part alike as long as you have that team concept that we're a church, and as a church, our goal is to win people to Christ. The church filled with men and women who work as a team will guarantee at the judgment seat of Christ, we all part alike.

You know what? You see it in families. That's where it starts: moms and dads and later their children. I told you Thursday night, a church is only as strong as the families in it. You know what? Sometimes Dad goes on the firing line and Mom stays home. Sometimes Mom goes on the firing line and Dad stays home. Sometimes the children go on the firing line and Mom and Dad stay home. They stay by the stuff, but at the end, they all part alike because they're a team. That's why God gave us parents, one of the many reasons He gave us parents.

You ever notice how God has given us two of almost everything? You got two eyes, got two ways to breathe, you got two lungs, you got two kidneys, you got two arms, you got two legs, you got two ears. That's because if you lose one, you can still function. That's the concept of two parents. There should never be a time or a place that a family is not doing ministry together. That doesn't mean that everybody has to be at church every time the door is open. It means that they're a team, and when Mom and Dad stay home, the kids are doing something. When Dad stays home because the kids are here with Mom, then Dad goes to work, or Mom goes to work, and the Dad says it's a team concept. Most parents never see it. They never get it, this building of a team in their family, the importance of ministering to people.

Some of God's people, they never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. I mean, over the years, I've looked and heard every excuse of why not to come to church. Now, I just got to say this, then I—this is my own opinion. You got your own, I don't care, that's fine. But I'm up here right now, so I'm going to tell you how I was raised. When I was raised—and I know I'm old school—but I came out of a time when Christianity still meant something, and when we grew up, you went to church on Sunday. Now, I understand there's a time, your work or you're sick, or I get that. But you went to church on Sunday. No ball game took the precedence. No this took the precedence. No that took the precedence. Church was number one in your life. Now you can do whatever you want to do. That's how I was raised. That's what I believe, and that's my stand for me. I can't stand for you. That's me. But oh boy, I'll tell you what, I've seen so many excuses not to come to church at just the drop of a hat. I've seen Easter Sunday or Mother's Day, you're going to have dinner at four o'clock in the afternoon, but oh, I gotta stay home this morning to get things ready. Order out Chinese. I've heard him say, "Oh, big crowds bother me. Sitting on that

log hurts my back." But all those hard chairs at the ball game and those big crowds, they help you to relax. Oh, I've heard it. You got a headache Sunday morning and a backache Sunday night, but by work time on Monday morning, now you're feeling all right. Little Johnny gets the sniffles. Little Johnny gets the sniffles, pneumonia, we all suppose, takes the whole family to stay home just to blow that poor kid's nose. I'm telling it, I've heard them. I've heard them all.

The ministry starts with families as a team covering each other so the ministry can go forward. Now let me say this, you're going to love this. Today, right now, many of you parents are setting the example for your kids. But I want to say also right now, many of your kids are setting examples for the parents. The church is built on teams: families, singles, teenagers, couples growing up together, recognizing what Christ has done for them, understanding that they're not in these last days going to succumb to a comfortable Christianity. You're going to make it a sacrificial Christianity. You're going to do whatever you got to do to get to that level, to be what God wants you to be. You're going to be the elite. You're going to be above the rest. You're going to be able to be counted on God to be put anywhere, anytime, anyplace to get the job done. We as a church, when it comes to soul winning, if you're wise and be part of the team at the judgment seat of Christ, we're all part alike. The team concept, not a one-man show, not a one-man show at all. I'm no more relevant to this than any other individual out there. God would replace me in five seconds, just like He could replace you in five seconds, just like He could replace you. Nobody's expendable, or we're all expendable, I should say. It's a thing where you know what, God has what He wants to do, and He's put you here to raise you up.

I can't help but think this, and maybe I'm dead wrong, and if I am, you forgive me. I say this every week, we get visitors that come in all the time. We got a nice host of great visitors today. I always wonder, knowing how our church is and knowing what God is doing here, I always wonder if those visitors out there aren't just looking for something that they want because they want to be better than the average. They're not just looking for the next step up, someplace that they can really be what God saved them to be. Well, I'm telling you, God saved you for one purpose, and that's to bear fruit. Don't be like Israel. Don't become barren. Don't lose your identity in the captivity of this world. You're the aristocracy of heaven. Our overall goal, when everything we do, was one thing: to bear fruit unto God, being a righteous branch, to reproduce ourselves in others. At the end of the times of the Gentiles, when it all finishes up, Romans 11:25, we as a church, when it comes to soul winning, if you're wise, will be part of the team and will part alike.

Now next week, we'll go inside soul winning, and I'll show you eight elements of being a biblical New Testament soul winner. Eight things that you and I need in our life to fulfill Proverbs 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is as a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Let's have a word of prayer. After we're dismissed, please take time to sign up for everything back there that you need to sign. If you want to pick up one of these T-shirts, we have them over at the bookstore. You're welcome to do those. I'll call you back here in just a few minutes for our meeting. Don't forget you got the draft, and we'll get all set up for restart. Turn around, let's have a word of prayer. Father, we...